

From: Louise Cholock [REDACTED]
Sent: February 21, 2025 8:50 AM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Legislation re Auditor General

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Dear committee:

I am writing to express my concern and strong opposition to the proposed amendments to the Auditor General Act included in the Government Organization and Administration Act. These changes represent an alarming attack on government accountability and transparency in Nova Scotia.

The auditor general is one of the few independent institutions ensuring that public funds are used responsibly and that government decisions are made in the best interest of Nova Scotians. The proposed changes are a clear attempt to weaken that oversight, which is especially troubling given this government's recent push to remove environmental protections, pursue fracking, uranium exploration, and allow industry to bypass regulatory safeguards.

I believe this is bad faith governance for the following reasons:

****Undermining Oversight**** – Giving the government the power to fire the auditor general without cause removes impartial financial oversight and discourages future auditors from challenging government decisions. This opens the door for financial mismanagement and corruption.

****Eroding Transparency**** – Allowing the government to make portions of an auditor general's report private means Nova Scotians could be denied critical information about how public money is being spent. Given this government's attempts to strip away environmental regulations, what safeguards will remain to ensure industry is held accountable?

****Concentration of Power**** – These changes consolidate control over information within the premier's office, giving them the ability to suppress or alter reports under vague justifications of "public interest." This is especially dangerous when paired with efforts to dismantle environmental oversight, leaving Nova Scotians in the dark about risks to our land, water, and health.

****Contradictions in Leadership**** – Premier Houston has repeatedly claimed to value accountability and transparency, yet this move eliminates the checks and balances that ensure those principles are upheld. I do not believe it is a coincidence that this is happening while his government pushes for projects that could have lasting environmental and financial consequences.

****Threats to Freedom of Information**** – I find it deeply troubling that this bill allows public entities to reject requests they deem "frivolous" or "vexatious." Who determines what qualifies as frivolous? What safeguards exist to ensure that inconvenient or politically sensitive information isn't simply dismissed under these vague terms? This move further erodes transparency and makes it harder for Nova Scotians to hold their government accountable.

We deserve a government that respects transparency, protects public resources, and upholds the principles it once claimed to stand for. I urge you to oppose these changes and ensure that the auditor general remains an independent, non-partisan watchdog that serves the people—not the political interests of the governing party.

I would note that every single person I have talked to about this - many of whom voted for this government, feel that this step is simply appalling and seems to represent a lamentable drop in standards and appears to reflect the deeply depressing state of affairs in the US.

I respectfully request that this legislation be quashed.

Thanks

Louise Cholock